

Meeting Report

The sixteenth meeting of the European Histamine Research Society (EHRS) was held in Štrbské Pleso, Czechoslovakia in May 1987, at the kind initiation of Dr Rado Nosál. It was attended by over 130 members and guests who were accommodated at Hotel Patria in the mountains of the High Tatras, over 4000 feet above sea-level. Sixteen countries of Europe were represented. The weather at this high Health Resort was cool, with heavy rain on one day and thick mist on another. Later, the sun appeared and then we were able to enjoy the lakes and mountain scenery.

After the speeches of welcome on the Thursday from the Dean of Bratislava Medical School and the President of the Slovak Medical Society and a short talk on the history of Czechoslovakia, the main Conference Lecture on 'The Release of Histamine by Free Radicals' was presented by Piero Mannaioni (of Florence). The generation of free radicals can be a signal capable of triggering the secretion of histamine from mast cells. A relationship exists between this generation (as, for example, using paracetamol or cocaine) and the release of histamine from rat serosal mast cells and from isolated perfused guinea-pig hearts during ischemia. The talk was much appreciated. The rest of the morning covered Histamine Liberation and Cell Regulation. Sayings of the day included 'We have time for just one and a half questions, but if the first is too long we may have to lose the half', 'Thank you for asking that very good question, - my co-workers may consider it' and 'We had immortalised cells isolated from rat fetuses'.

The excursion in the afternoon was to Levoča where we visited the museum in the old town hall and heard an organ recital by Ivan Sokol in the fine baroque church (with its famous carvings and altar). Then, we moved on to the Ružbachy thermal spa where several members had the full procedures – said to be not fun but very nice!!! The lady in charge was heard to say to one male English member 'trunks off, sit down, lie down and I'll do you'. Later, one of the young lady pharmacologists from Italy said her bath was full of bubbles and, when pressed, she said she thought they were bubbles of carbon monoxide!!! We returned home exhausted at midnight after a magnificent dinner. On Friday, it was further discussion on Histamine Liberation and Cell Regulation. During these two sessions, we heard (yet again) about the value of homeopathic dilutions. The French authors of the paper told us of the inhibition of human basophil degranulation by concentrations of 10^{-20} M of histamine and they even offered to send samples for others to test. We also heard (after lunch) that rabbits eat equally well in the day or night. Someone asked how they saw the food at night in the dark and the Polish worker replied that rabbits are sensible things sometimes. The session on Histamine and the Nervous System ended with one author suggesting to us that there was a role of histamine in schizophrenia.

Then we all went to hotel Helios for discussion of the posters. Each author was allowed one minute for oral presentation (and one slide), followed by two minutes of discussion. One English member used not only one minute and two slides for presentation but also nearly all of his three minutes and then did not give up easily. John Foreman did a good job in charge all the time, though not always looking as though he understood what was going on. It poured with rain on the way home and most got wet! Saturday was Circulation, Respiration and Gut in the morning, and after lunch we moved to Immunology and Metabolism. During this session, the cold water in the taps ceased (twice) despite the heavy rain the previous day. We still cannot find out how the bath water flooded the bathroom of one member's room when the plug was pulled out! Sayings of the day included 'Pig is most close

to Man for liver transportation experiments' and therefore should be used', 'It is your breath making that noise on the amplifier and you should stop it', and 'My studies gave an univocal result' (instead of unequivocal).

The farewell dinner was a fantastic display during which the international jury gave their verdict on the poster competition. The superb prizes went to workers from the Netherlands, Spain and England. There was also a fine prize for a quiz competition on the history of the EHRS, which had been admirably compiled by Madeleine Ennis and Eddy Neugebauer. Secretary-General G.B. West was presented with a fabulous double set of Bohemian glassware as he had just retired from the post after ten years. A disco in the basement followed and of course, we all had to sing our International Anthem, complete with its three new verses. Our sincere thanks go to Dr Rado Nosál and his colleagues for arranging such a fine meeting. The next meeting will be held in Copenhagen in May 1988. Our new Secretary-General is Piero Mannaioni from Florence.

G.B. West (London)